

WATER BILLS

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federal government for the adverse impact conservation measures mandated by the federal government have on streamflow. LB 701 carries a pretty hefty price tag - 10 million dollars from the state and a substantial hike in the NRD levy limit. But compared to the cost of non-compliance and the hit local economies will take under current DNR proposals, LB 701 stands out as a workable, realistic, prudent option.

Without question, LB 701 will generate plenty of attention at the public hearing before the Natural Resources Committee. We commend Senator Christensen and the group WaterClaim for the work put forth in developing and drafting LB 701. It is a bold measure that deserves a chance to work.

CHRISTENSEN

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The campaign was one of the costliest in the state, but in the end, the good guy won. Mark is now a state senator who we can trust, and one who we will support and help all we can. He is a strong family man with seven children, and possesses great integrity, courage and decency. He now sits on the important Natural Resources Committee that deals with all irrigation-related bills. He is a true-blue ally and strong advocate for irrigated agriculture. Mark will be a senator who will never forget who elected him. His strong sense of right and wrong and courage to stand tall guarantee he will not fall prey to the beguiling forces in Lincoln.

GOVERNORS AND SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR SIGN PLATTE RIVER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

After ten years of meetings, negotiations, and deliberations, the governors of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska signed off on the controversial Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, better known as the Cooperative Agreement (CA). Governor Heineman's signature came on October 30, 2006 and Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne OK'd the CA on September 28, 2006. To put it mildly, we were very, very disappointed when our governor decided to go along with the CA. Nebraskans First battled hard against this massive federal government power grab since the process began back in 1997. Our newsletters over the years have chronicled the process and spelled out our concerns with the CA, which essentially involves handing over control of the Platte River to the US Fish and Wildlife Service forever under what is called "adoptive management". The CA is a multi-phase program that seeks to incrementally take water away from Nebraska Platte River Basin irrigation and thereby generate new major instream flows (417,000 acre feet) at Grand Island for the alleged benefit of the whooping crane, piping plover, interior least tern and pallid sturgeon.

Executive Director Don Adams has called the CA a "Jurassic Park-like reengineering of nature pipe dream."

Before signing the CA, Governor Heineman did hold three public meetings in Gering, Grand Island and Lincoln this past fall to hear from the public one last time. The governor gave Mr. Adams a preferred status at each hearing to present the case against the CA and in support of Nebraska irrigation. We thank the governor for this, but still cannot believe he ultimately signed the CA after all he heard at the hearings about the threat the CA posed for the future of irrigation in the Platte valley, and the huge economic hit communities there will likely have to endure as Phases II and III of the CA kick in down the road.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

We know exactly where one cow with mad cow disease is located among the millions and millions of cows in America, but we haven't a clue as to where thousands of illegal immigrants and terrorists are located. Maybe we should put the Department of Agriculture in charge of immigration.